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COMUNICATO CONGIUNTO DEL COMITATO PERMANENTE DI AL-AZHAR PER IL DIALOGO FRA LE RELIGIONI MONOTEISTICHE ED IL PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO PER IL DIALOGO INTERRELIGIOSO

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"No to generalisation and yes to self-criticism"

The Joint Committee of the Permanent Committee of al-Azhar for Dialogue with the Monotheistic Religions and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue held its annual meeting in the offices of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican City, 24-25 February 2004 A.D., equivalent to 4-5 Muharram 1425 A.H.

Two papers were presented during the meeting on *The rejection of generalisations and the importance of self-criticism*, from the Christian side by Dr Youssef Kamal El-Hage, Professor at the Notre Dame University of Louaizeh, Lebanon, and from the Muslim side by Sheikh Fawzi al-Zafzaf, President of the Permanent Committee of al-Azhar for Dialogue with the Monotheistic Religions.

The members of the committee considered and discussed the contents of the two papers. They noticed that there is agreement in the two religions, Christianity and Islam, in refusing generalisation in judging people and that where a sin is committed, whether by an individual or by a community, only that individual or community is to be held accountable and not others. Both religions advocate self-criticism at the individual and community level and the examination of conscience and asking pardon, a way of behaviour that may be an example to others.

The Joint Committee in issuing this common declaration addresses an appeal to all to avoid generalisations in judging people and to allocate responsibility only to those who have committed transgressions and not to blame innocent people for the misdeeds of others. It also appealed to all to practise examination of conscience and to admit guilt whenever applicable as a way of returning to right conduct.

In addressing this appeal the aim of the Joint Committee is to universalise justice, peace and love among all.

Sheikh Fawzi al-Zafazaf

President

Permanent Committee of al-Azhar
for Dialogue with Monotheistic Religions

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Archbishop Michael L. Fitzgerald

President

Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue